

Archaeology  
A Very Short Introduction

By Paul Bahn

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Where do you stand on the question of returning the Elgin Marbles to Greece?
- How can rational people tackle the problem of bestselling books such as those by Von Däniken or Hancock, filled with fantasies about extra-terrestrials or lost super-civilisations?
- Is it right to disturb the dead -- and should they be put on show?
- Many archaeological sites are receiving too many visitors, who are loving the past to death. How can we strike a balance between the public's right to see its heritage and the need to conserve sites for future generations?
- Has archaeology been harmed or enhanced by the antics of Indiana Jones, Lara Croft, or "Relic Hunter"?
- In a world of recession and cutbacks, how can a "luxury subject" like archaeology justify its funding?
- What is archaeology? Where does it start and end?
- Can "amateurs" still make a valuable contribution to archaeology, or should they now leave it to the "professionals"?
- Archaeology is no longer a treasure hunt, so what are archaeologists really seeking?
- Recent years have transformed archaeological research by bringing us computers, satellite photos, genetics, and chemical analyses -- what will be the main advances in the future?
- Discuss some practical applications of archaeology to current debates such as climate change, sea-level rises, earthquake activity, deforestation or ancient food production, the history and development of diseases.
- We are finding far too much archaeological material, and cannot store or conserve everything -- what is to be done?
- How can one differentiate a genuine artefact from a natural object?
- How does taphonomy -- i.e. the fact that some materials survive far better than others -- affect our deductions about the past?
- What is an archaeological site?
- How can museums strike a balance between instructing and entertaining the public?
- What are the good and the bad aspects of archaeology on the Internet?
- Is the antiquities trade the main cause of the looting and destruction of archaeological sites?
- Do you think that TV documentaries, or series like "Time Team", have improved archaeology's popularity in the eyes of the public?

Other books by this author

*Cave Art: A Guide to the Decorated Ice Age Caves of Europe* (Frances Lincoln, 2012)

*Disgraceful Archaeology* (The History Press Ltd, 2012)

Further Reading

Courbin *What is Archaeology?: An Essay on the Nature of Archaeological Research* (University of Chicago Press 1988)

Martin Carver *Archaeological Investigation* (Routledge 2009)

John Morton Coles *Experimental Archaeology* (The Blackburn Press 2010)